Vets, Unite with Workers! On to May Day!

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THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

25¢

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450 Rally in Cleveland and on West Coast

VETERANS DEMAND FREE ASHBY LEACH

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Local Address

Uniformed veterans climb Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Cleveland demanding Freedom for Ashby Leach.

On the weekend of March 12-13, over 350 veterans, workers and others demonstrated in Cleveland, while more than a hundred more demonstrated in Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego demanding FREE ASHBY LEACH and MAKE CHESSIE HONOR THE GI BILL FOR ALL VETS.

Ashby Leach, a former Vietnam Navy medic, took over the offices of the Chessie Railroad system in Cleveland last August 26th. This action culminated five years of trying to work through the system to get

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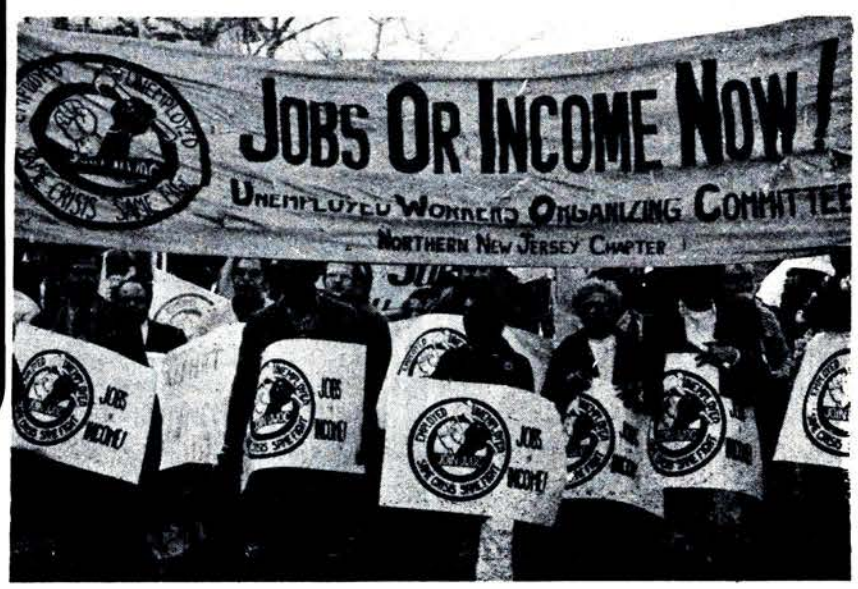
1000 UNEMPLOYED HIT CARTER 'JOBS' SCHEME



1000 workers, employed and unemployed march in Washington DC demanding No Cuts in federal extensions.

1,000 angry workers shattered the quiet of Jimmy Carter's honeymoon on Saturday, March 5th. While Carter was playing Dial-a-President, unemployed workers were marching, rallying and picketing--delivering a person to person message loud and clear right in front of the White House.

They came from chapters of the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee (UWOC) all over the East Coast, from as far away as St Louis and Louisville. Workers with 20 years on the job, thrown out cold as their plants shut down. Youth from Newark and Cincinnati, hit by 50% unemployment and

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NEW: VETERANS' NOTES

The first of a new series dealing with the rules and regulations which surround vets benefits and which the VA tries to hide behind.

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Coast to Coast Support for Free Ashby Leach Campaign

NATIONAL BUILDING ACTION

Veterans in the California Bay Area present Ashby Leach with a banner containing the signatures of hundreds of people who support the campaign to Free Ashby Leach.

When VVAW took up the campaign to Free Ashby Leach, there was a problem of publicity--although some people, particularly around the Cleveland area--remembered Ashby's takeover of the Terminal Tower, most people did not.

To change this situation and to get out to as many people as possible, a national speaking tour was planned. In a month, Ashby Leach and a spokesman for VVAW went from the East Coast to the West Coast, speaking to thousands of individuals at colleges, workers' centers, community organizations; and speaking to millions more through the media.

In Boston a Black radio station carried a half-hour program/interview with Ashby. In New York City, Pete Hamil, a columnist for the New York Daily News devoted a column to the case. In Chicago there was a press conference when Leach came to town; at the start, there were a couple of radio reporters talking to Ashby. Suddenly, five TV stations with cameras, lights, interviewers appeared, a crowd gathered, and the campaign to Free Ashby Leach was taken out to millions more people in that city. And so it went from city to city across the nation.

But media exposure was only one part of the tour and other activities designed to build support for Ashby and to publicize the situation that vets face today.

VVAW chapters took a series of steps to turn the campaign into a real battle, one pointed straight at the enemy, the Chessie System and the corporate power structure that lines up with Chessie. Demonstrations at Chessie offices went on around the country as vets talked with Chessie workers about what Ashby did and why he did it. In several cities, VVAW members and other supporters of the campaign went into the Chessie offices to serve a subpoena/indictment on Cyrus Eaton (President of the Board Emeritus) and Hays T Watkins (President), charging them with a series of crimes including robbery, extortion and conspiracy, and demanding their appearance at the Peoples' Tribunal in Cleveland (they didn't show up).

In Milwaukee vets seized the office of the Regional VA Director on the same day that Max Cleland was being sworn in as new VA head in Washington; not only was the Milwaukee action aimed at saying a new VA head wasn't going to make a damn bit of difference to our struggle, but also to expose the VA as part of the same system trying to crush Ashby Leach and millions of other veterans.

Along with these actions went days of talking to people, getting out leaflets and bringing vets and others to hear Ashby speak in person so that they could ask the questions they wanted to ask. And the result was, that in many places, among many people, the question is no longer "Who Is Ashby Leach," but "What Can We Do to Help Free Him?"

ASHBY LEACH SONG

Prairie Fire, a singing group from the Bay Area, has been on several nationwide tours singing their songs about the struggles of workers. They were also in Cleveland on the 12th through the 14th of March where they sang a new song they had written about Ashby Leach and the struggle of veterans. The words of that song are reprinted below.

1. What do you think would
make a man,
Do what Ashby's done?
Takin' over the Terminal Tower
At the point of a gun.
What do you think would make
a man
Know he must stand up?
What do you think would make
somebody
Say they've had enough?

2. Go down to the VA
See the vets on line
Cuttin' through the red tape
jungle
Hassled all the time.
You ask any veteran
of the rich man's wars
Damn near every one would say
He spoke for us all.

(Chorus)

Ashby Leach seized the Tower
Made our demands heard
loud and clear
Seized the day! Seized the hour!
Made the rich man tremble
in fear.
Millions of us hate the system,
Every outrage, every lie.
Got to rally vets and everybody
Free Ashby Leach is our
battle cry!

3. Five long years he struggled
for
The veteran's rights he
earned
Played their game, went thru
channels
Only to be burned.
Wrote to Congress, went to
see 'em
With his just demands.
They all left him with no choice
He had to take a stand!

4. Went to Chessie with his
shotgun
Barrel loaded full
With his letters all unanswered
Then he made his move.
Took the tower, went on TV
Millions heard him say
All the benefits they owe veterans
Chessie's got to pay!

(Chorus)

5. Every veterans knows the
story
How we all been used
Fight abroad for the rich man
Here at home abused.
Goin' in it sounded good
All that sweet-talking jive.
Their only problem seems to be
We made it home alive!

6. The rich know well that we
are many
That they are only few
If one man could do so much
What could our millions do?
Got to build VVAW
Veterans hear the call
Build a fighting veterans movement
Veterans one and all!

(Chorus)

VVAW's building for Ashby Leach's appearance in Philadelphia brought together over 125 workers, vets and students to hear him speak.

VETS: CELEBRATE MAY DAY

On the weekend of May 1st thousands of workers will gather across the US to celebrate May Day, as working people have done worldwide for almost a century. The people who run this country won't like it at all, for May Day is a slap in their face.

In more than 20 cities workers will shatter the picture the bosses like to paint of the "partnership between labor and capital." Workers who they like to think of as divided by nationality, sex and age will raise a united fist in defiance, look these rich rulers straight in the eye and, with the anger that comes from years of being ripped off and oppressed, tell them to go to hell.

It's no wonder the capitalists hate May Day and all it stands for. And they've gone to great lengths in the past to stamp it out--even going so far as to call it Law and Order Day and promoting Labor Day in opposition to May Day. This year Carter has announced that May Day is "Loyalty Day." But despite efforts to bury it and the fact that it was actually abandoned in this country for almost two decades, May Day, like the struggle of workers, could never disappear. The revival of the celebration of May Day in recent years reflects the resurgence of that struggle and the growing strength and organization of the workers' movement.

For May Day is the day when workers come together from factories, mines and fields where they labor daily to produce riches for the owners. They come from the unemployment lines and welfare offices where they are forced to go after they have been cast off by a system that can no longer employ them profitably. They come out of a thousand and more daily battles they have to wage in order to live with some dignity and decency. And they unite as members of the same class, the working class, to put forward their common demands.

This year the May Day Banner is inscribed with the following demands:

US Out of Southern Africa, Superpower--Hands Off

Jobs or Income Now

Fight Wage Cuts and Speedup

Down with Discrimation and Oppression of Minorities

No Cutbacks in Public Services

May Day--Chicago in the '30s. This was long a day when thousands of workers in the US and worldwide unite to show their continued spirit and anger against the capitalist bosses.

Decades after the fight for the shorter working day first erupted, workers must still labor long hours in many industries. This is vivid proof that whatever victories are won the capitalists will always try to take them back--and then some. It is not surprising that many of the demands raised in May Days three and four decades ago are still important struggles for workers today.

As long as the profit system--capitalism--reigns supreme, there will be unemployment and war, people will be driven to exhaustion through speedup and forced overtime, there will be racial discrimination and national oppression. Because at the essence of capitalism is the necessity to constantly maximize profits by forcing more and more unpaid labor out of workers--to force them to produce more each day relative to the wages they are paid.

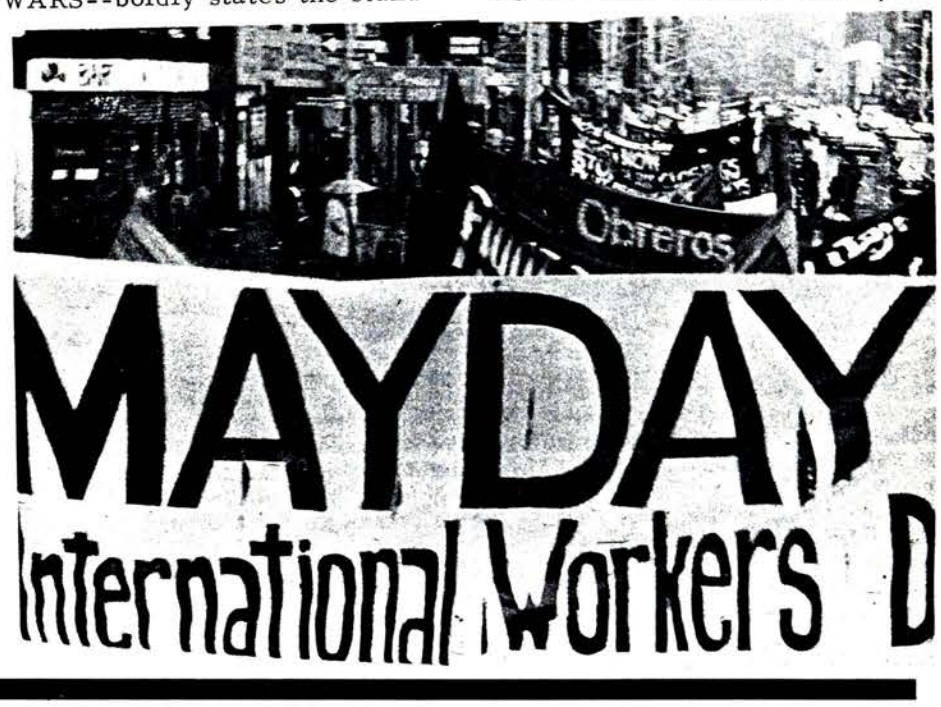
That's why they keep a large pool of unemployed to force down wages. This drive to push down the living standards of workers for the sake of increased profits also makes it impossible for them to employ all the available workers even in they wanted to. Behind the miserable conditions Blacks and other minority nationalities have been forced to live in lie the capitalists efforts to force the greatest amount of labor for the lowest possible pay out of them, and to keep Blacks and whites divided to prevent them from uniting to fight for their common interests. And they have been--and will again--be driven to war to expand and protect their interests against other imperialist countries in addition to dozens of invasions and wars like Vietnam.

People don't want to go on fighting the same battles over and over again, constantly having to do battle just to keep from being pushed into the dirt. That's why May Day is important to rally people not only around immediate demands, but around slogans that spell out the overall character and the ultimate goals of this truggle. This year May Day celebrations and demonstrations around the country will unite around four such slogans:

The first slogan--FIGHT, DON'T STARVE--declares our determination not to bow down and have our livelihood stolen and our militant spirit crushed, but to rise in resistance in the face of the capitalists' growing economic and political crisis and intensified attacks on the masses of people. The second slogan--FIGHT THE RICH, DON'T FIGHT THEIR WARS--boldly states the stand of the working class in the face of the increasing danger of war between the US rulers and their capitalist rivals in the Soviet Union. The third slogan describes the task that confronts the working class in carrying forward its banner in the fight against the capitalist exploiters --WORKERS UNITE TO LEAD THE FIGHT AGAINST ALL OPPRESSION. The fourth slogan points to the source of our oppression and exploitation and is put forward to unite people in the spirit of dealing with the root causes of the problems--DOWN WITH THE SYSTEM OF WAGE SLAVERY.

Veterans, too, have a special interest in May Day. And not just because most vets are also members of the working class with all the many reasons that other workers have for getting together on that day. In a particular way, veterans have been used by the capitalist class that runs this country; it was our blood and the lives of our buddies that were wasted in the service of the rich. Its the same rich class which, once they have sucked their use out of us, throw us aside. And so vets have special reasons to fight against them now.

May Day is truly a workers' holiday. It is a festival of the oppressed. The forces of the working class are building in the deadly war against the capitalists, as will be seen in the May Day celebrations. But many fierce and difficult struggles lie ahead. A great deal needs to be accomplished. May Day is an important time for workers to marshal their forces, chart the direction forward and celebrate the gains their struggle has won, as well as their ultimate victory.



New Draft on Ruling Class Drawing Boards

NO "VOLUNTEERS" FOR VOLAR

The Defense Department has made its recommendations to Carter and discussions by ruling circles in Washington have started on the need for the US to return to a new "standby" draft lottery and eventually to a complete compulsory draft system.

With the imperialist rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union heating up in Europe and in Africa, the US rulers have to make further preparations for war. The Pentagon estimates that more than 450,000 casualties will need to be replaced in the first six months after a major war begins in Europe. They want a new standby "wartime draft system" (including the annual draft lottery of 20 year olds) so that the US can produce 650,000 warm-blooded bodies (not those of the rulers, of course) as replacements within those six months.

Even this idea is considered only a stopgap measure to the "nation's military problems." The four-year experiment with the all-volunteer military is being termed, by a Senate study, a failure, "a sinking ship that is becoming increasingly costly to keep afloat." The all-volunteer force (VOLAR) is looked upon as overly costly, increasingly undermanned, and potentially unreliable.

*Due to pay increases and bonuses to entice recruits into the combat arms, personnel costs have increased from 42% (pre Vietnam war) to 56% of the yearly Defense Budget. And this is despite the reduction of overall personnel by 40%. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the annual manpower bill will shoot up by as much as 8 billion dollars by 1985. And another study estimates that recruiting would cost $29 billion more than the draft to increase the military to the Vietnam War level of 3.1 miilion enlisted men through the volunteer system.

*The high proportion of personnel costs in the Defense Budge worries Congress because it sharply curtails funds abailable for new weapons systems, military ship construction and training costs. They need to keep government borrowing (and military spending as a part of that) within some limits in order not to deny capital to private corporations.

Military advertising, paid for by the taxpayers, shows the "excitement" of the military without ever touching the harsh realities of what the military is used for.

*When the official unemployment rate reached its peak of 10% in 1975, the military had no problem filling its recruitment quotas. Today, even with the official unemployment rate for 18-19 year olds at a record 19% for white youth and 36.9% for Blacks, and with higher pay, bonuses, and no war, the military is having a difficult time filling its quotas. In the last three months of 1976 the Army was 6% below its quota and the Marines 15% low. And all this was despite the flood of recruits trying to get into the military before the new GI Bill came into effect on the 1st of January, 1977.

Once in, recruits, seeing the petty harassment of the military and lies about job placement and training are quitting or deserting at a high rate. For fiscal 1976 at least one third of all Army and Marine Corps recruits, and a quarter of Navy and Air Force recruits will leave the military before completing their initial enlistments. In the Army, over half of these will leave more than six months after enlisting. Desertion rates in the present peacetime Army, Marine Corps and Navy are substantially higher than in the pre-Vietnam period.

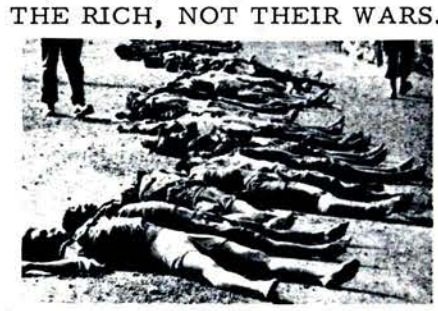
Besides the money lost by having to train someone who then leaves the military early, another factor worries the country's bosses. In the words of a former Pentagon Security Chief, these people "have a number of lethal skills--they have been trained in small arms, rifles, grenades, explosives, and hand-to-hand combat."

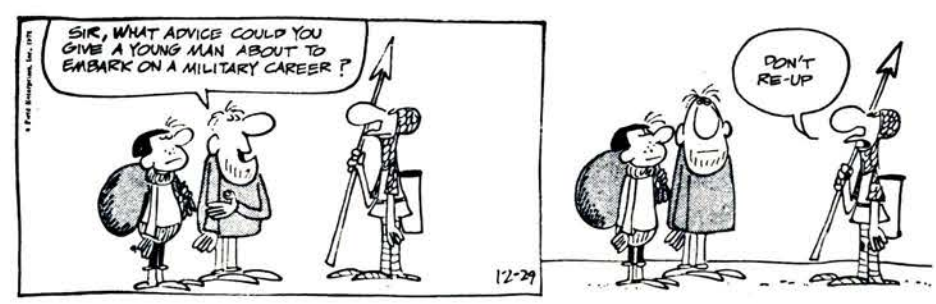
The third major problem with the VOLAR which has Congress scared is the high percentage of minority and poor working people (or their sons) in the military's enlisted ranks. Nearly 80% of the military is now from the working class. And Blacks, who represent only 12% of the American population now comprise 24% of the Army; recruiters predict that the figure will soon rise to 30%. Because discrimination in the military has not diminished--witness the KKK at Camp Pendleton--Blacks are concentrated in the combat arms. This situation plus the expectation of half a million casualties early in the next war point toward a military which may be highly unreliable. Fears of GI rebellions such as occurred during Vietnam are still fresh in the minds of the rich.

It was the antiwar movement and the tremendous sentiment of the American people against conscription that forced an end to the draft. That opposition hasn't subsided; 54% of Americans surveyed oppose restoring the draft. Among males 18 to 24, the group most directly affected, the sentiment was an overshelming 82% against the draft. Realizing this, some politicians are fishing around for some sort of universal national service program in which all young men and possibly women would be given the choice between military duty and some form of civilian social service such as the Peace Corps or VISTA. Part of this plan includes lowering military pay scales to the pre-volunteer army level.

Even with this plan the bosses realize that special incentives will be necessary to induce enough young people to opt for military duty; only half of the 18-24 year old men surveyed support this plan, and more than half say that is such a plan were imposed, they would go for the social work rather than military service.

Many of the young men that VVAW has talked with, whether on the job or at recruiting offices or in schools, have remembered the Vietnam war and said that they would leave the country before fighting a war for the rich. It is right to resist an unjust war, or to resist a draft which, like the last one, grabs up the sons of the working class to fight a war not in their interests. For VVAW the battleground has shifted; once we came to see in whose interests we had been forced to fight, whether in Vietnam or other places around the world, we also came to see who was our real enemy. And that is why we say today, "FIGHT THE RICH, NOT THEIR WARS."





VA Plan: Save a Nickel, Screw a Vet

VA Comes Down on Detroit College

Vets in Detroit come out to protest at VA

Detroit worker-vets demonstrate against cuts.

Here and there around the country, in little ways and in big ways, the VA is out to get vets. Not get us the things we need like decent medical care, disability pensions and educational assistance. They're out to get us the shaft--get us off the GI Bill. Money is tight, so the ruling class is cutting back on programs for vets; they need the money to spend on things like B-1 Bombers, tanks, railroads, and other projects to shore up their faltering economy. For the VA this means screwing a vet here or there to save a few thousand, or screwing a bunch of vets to save a few million.

Vets at the College of Lifelong Learning at Wayne State University in Detroit recently got the word--cutback on their GI Bill payments. The CLL is a program at the university where working people can go to school to obtain a bachelor's degree in general studies. The program is set up so students can take TV classes on week nights and attend two all-day Saturday and Sunday conferences during each quarter.

The VA's latest line of nonsense is that TV time and conferences don't count for as much as they used to, and therefore the vets in the program (about 80% of the students) are only entitled to benefits as part time students. This means that single vets will be reduced from $292 a month to $146 a month, and married vets reduced from $347 a month to $174. The benefits paid out will only amount to about 50% of what the vets in the program are entitled to.

What's the VA's game here? It's more than just a 50% cut which is bad enough. Most of the vets have jobs and families; few could afford the time that would be needed to take the added courses which would be necessary to be full time. Few of the vets will be able to sign up for the program with the pay cut. The VA knows this. Combined with the already implemented restrictions of sign-in sheets, minimum grade average requirements and the forfeiture of two months pay for an incomplete, this new attack means that vets would be dropping out faster than GIs leaving a base on a 2-day pass. This would mean that the CLL would be in danger of closing its doors for lack of students. With all those vets out of the school, the VA stands to save $12,000,000.

Like so many other vets in other places around the country, the 2800 vets at CLL are pissed off and fighting back. There is plenty of anger and desire to fight this abuse, but the best way to fight has not been too clear due to the wimpy ideas put forward by some so-called leaders. For instance, leaders from the local United Auto Workers union (UAW--most of the students are autoworkers) want the fight to take the form of a show to lobby Congress. Aside from the fact that even if Congress did act it would be too late, this tactic would only be asking one part of the ruling class to overrule another part. Sort of like asking your first sergeant to countermand the company commander's orders to keep your boots shined.

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At Veterans' Admin.

DIFFERENT FACE--SAME OLD ATTACKS

In what at first appears to be an unprecedented move, Carhas appointed Max Cleland, a triple amputee Vietnam vet, as head of the Veterans Administration. The Carter strategy of "fresh blood" and "people who came from nowhere, "designed to win votes from the American people who were sick and tired of the old gang, is at work now at the VA.

However, just like Carter's national cabinet composed of recycled hacks from the Johnson and Kennedy administrations and other "unknowns" who sit on the boards of directors of some of the most powerful corporations in America, Max Cleland is no newcomer either.

Max is, in fact, an old political warhorse. Previous to his tour of duty in the Army, Max served as a Congressional intern in the US House of Representatives. Following his return to civilian life, Cleland quickly became a Georgia State Senator and fast friend of Jimmy Carter, then governor of Georgia. After he failed to become Lieutenant Governor of that state, Max picked up and moved to Washington to serve as a staff member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs until Carter tapped him to head the VA.

Heralded as the first VA chief who wasn't first the national leader of some traditional vets organization, Max hasn't severed all ties with the past. His first official act was to appoint Rufus H. Wilson, former national commander of Amvets and a VA bureaucrat of over 20 years, as his number 2 man. Wilson, like Cleland, a member of every national vets organization on the books--not including VVAW--has served as director of the VA's Department of Veterans Benefits since 1975, a VA department which has earned the disgust and hatred of vets everywhere.

Regardless of the multitude of promises by these two gold-plated bureaucrats regarding changes in the VA sys-

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vets' notes

The history of the struggle of veterans, both past and present, shows that the only way vets win things like the "Bonus" or the GI Bill or any of the other vets benefits is by uniting and fighting for them. One of the tactics used by the VA and other bureaucrats which serve the rich bosses of the country is to try to confuse and divert the struggle by mountains of regulations, red tape, rules, restrictions and legal type gobbledygook. Another tactic is secrecy: Ashby Leach, for instance, only found out about the apprenticeship program(where the VA will pay the difference between apprentice and journeyman wages) from other vets on his job; and, many of the Korean and "Cold War" vets whose GI Bill benefits were obliterated back on May 30, 1976, only found out they were entitled to these benefits after the benefits had stopped.

In the interests of cutting through some of the VA-produced fog about benefits, The Veteran is beginning this column called Vets Notes which will identify benefits that vets have won and point out some of the ways in which those hard-won benefits are under attack. The Veteran welcomes your suggestions concerning future topics for this column.

The GI Bill: Passed on October 15, 1976, what is officially called "The Veterans Education and Employment Assistance Act of 1976" (also known as Public Law 94-502 and Senate Bill #969) is the most recent collection of additions and amendments to the basic GI Bill. Some of the features of this Bill are fairly well known--for instance, the increase of 8% in educational benefits, in the subsistence paid disabled vets in vocational rehabilitation programs, for vets on apprenticeship or OJT programs, and for vets' survivors now in school. This Bill also kills off the GI Bill for men and women joining the service after January 1, 1977, and replaces it with a matching funds program for the future.

The 1976 GI Bill also:

*Permits vets to use the GI Bill for graduate school; vets now are eligible a maximum of 45 months for schooling, though it must be completed within 10 years of getting out of the military.

*Provides that GI Bill checks will continue during vacations or changes in schools as long as the time involved is less than 30 days. In talking with vets around the country, VVAW has found that many vets are not getting these checks; if you are in school now and are going to register again for summer school, and if there are not more than 30 days in between, you should be getting paid. If you're not, get together with other vets who are being screwed over and raise hell!

*Increases VA educational loans from $600 a year to $1500 a year maximum. The total loan can't be more than $292 (the monthly GI Bill payment for a full-time single vet student) times the number of months of eligibility you have left. Repayment of the loan, at 7% interest, begins nine months after you stop going to school. The catch to all this fine-sounding "aid" to veterans is the necessity of going to two banks and being turned down for loans (most vets on the GI Bill have no trouble finding

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Detroit Cuts

(Continued from page 5)

Other misleaders wanted to take the problem to the courts but this idea was quickly dropped because most of the vets understand whose side the courts are on. Still others wanted to pressure the UAW to pressure Carter because the attack is coming from Carter. This problem with this tactic is that it means relying on a few saviors in the union, which is hardly where strength lies.

Our strength in such battles is our numbers and our unity in attacking the bureaucracy from which the attack came. As one vet put it, "We've got to take it right home to the VA. We need a demonstration at the VA to let them know we won't stand for this."

Relying on ourselves and our strength is the only way. This was shown recently at the University of Massachusetts in Boston where the VA cut vets off the GI Bill because the school used a "pass/fail" grading system. The vets organized and showed their power--and got the VA to back off and say "they made a mistake."

In Detroit there have been two demonstrations of 50 and 150 people. The vets are angry and willing to fight, and if that fight is directed at the VA it can be won. We learned from the experience in Boston and countless other times that a united show of force aimed at the proper target--the VA and the whole rotten system of which it is a part--can win victories in these battles.

Pendleton Marines Released

The release of eight defendants from the brig marks a breakthrough in the case of 14 Black marines arrested for attacking what they thought was a Ku Klux Klan meeting at Camp Pendleton near San Diego, California.

On November 13, 1976, the 14 Marines broke into a barracks room and fought with six Marines (four white, two Mexican-Americans). Later it turned out they had burst into the wrong room. The Klan, in a widely announced public meeting, was actually next door armed with .357 magnums and knives. Twelve of the Blacks were charged with conspiracy to commit murder; two pleaded guilty to less charges. (For more information, see the Feb/March issue of The Veteran.)

For five months before the incident, a dozen or so Klan members had been operating freely on base without any trouble from the brass. They threatened and harassed Blacks, bragged about sabotaging a Black officer's car and carried knives they called their "nigger stickers."

Following the incident, the Marine Corps punished one Klansman, Dennis Campbell; they gave him a small fine for using government equipment to run off his scummy leaflets.

On the other hand, 8 of the Black Marines accused of planning the attack on the Klan have been held for the last 3 months in the brig--without bail. They've been kept isolated from the public and have hardly even been able to see their lawyers. The Klan has been given full media coverage to peddle their racist trash.

The cases of the 12 remaining defendants have been severed from each other to prevent a joint defense. The military court has already declared it will not allow them to raise the issue of Klan attacks on Black GIs in the trials--the only "issue" is the barracks room fight.

The San Diego chapter of VVAW is organizing to free the Black Marines and to defend their righteous intention to deal with the Klan. On February 19 VVAW hald a demonstration in front of the Marine Corps Recriters office in San Diego. The 25 people demonstrating were in high spirits because of the release of the 8 defendants. The demonstrators chanted, "Common defense for the Pendleton 14," "Drop the charges--right now!" "Smach the Klan, bust the Corps, Pendleton 14 ain't takin' anymore." Several people passing by joined in the marching and chanting. A picket line at Camp Pendleton itself is planned for the near future.

Public sentiment against the Klan and against the unjust charges facing the Black Marines was the reason behind the release of the defendants. Their release is a real victory even though the charges are still being pressed. The struggle will continue to force the military to drop charges--right now!

THE VETERAN
Vietnam Veterans Against the War 25¢

____ ONE YEAR, $6 ____ INSTITUTIONS, $15

SUSTAINERS ____ I would like to become part of the monthly sustainer program. I will contribute $_____ a month. This includes a subscription to the VETERAN.

CONTRIBUTIONS ____ I would like to contribute $_____ to building VVAW and the VETERAN.

Contributions to VVAW are Recognized by the IRS as TAX DEDUCTIBLE!!

Make checks payable to Vietnam Veterans Against the War
Box 20184, Chicago, ILL 60620

WEST COAST ACTIONS

While vets and other supporters from the East and Midwest were in Cleveland demonstrating their support for the campaign to Free Ashby Leach, there were three actions going on in California.

LOS ANGELES

In Los Angeles on Sunday, March 13, VVAW set up pup tents and ten banners at a street corner--the busiest intersection in the county--near the Regional VA Office. Handing out leaflets and talking through megaphones, the vets got a tremendous response from people driving by, with countless fists raised in support and horns honking. People dug the fact that vets were fighting back.

After nine hours of action, the 25 vets went to a nearby house to see the film "Only the Beginning" (which shows veterans fighting against the war in Indochina--see article on page 16) and to talk about building the struggle of veterans. As one World War II vet, who came for just a little while and ended up staying for the whole nine hours said, "This is the first time I've come to something like this and really felt a part of it, felt like I had something to contribute." Vets were so enthused about the actions, that they discussed a week of actions during the spring break from school.

On Monday a picket line was set up on the same corner; later it moved to the front of the VA. Vets leafletted the VA parking lot as well as busses and cars stopped at the busy corner. Thirty vets and supporters were joined by vets passing by excited to see the picket in front of the VA Office and wanting to join with the demands to Free Ashby Leach, Extend and Expand the GI Bill, and the statement that We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War.

While the militant picket line continued in front of the VA, a delegation of three vets went into the building demanding to speak to the head of the VA. He was busy, they were told, but the head of the special services division, Richard K. Sorenson and two of his assistants met with the delegation. As one of the vets put it, "Now, normally, it takes 2 months to see this guy, and then only with a petition signed by the President. It took us all of 2 minutes We presented them with a letter (demanding that the VA meet VVAW in a public forum) and told them we wanted it sent

Part of March 11 Picket Line outside Senator Cranston's office in San Francisco.

to Max Cleland (new VA director), and that VVAW and other vets were putting them on notice that we were going to fight any and all attacks that the VA and this system comes down with."

The success of the encampment was closely tied to building the speaking tour for Ashby Leach several weeks earlier. VVAW went back to the main campuses where Ashby had spoken. Because of the earlier struggle around Leach, the media picked up on the encampment, spreading the word about the struggle of vets and the Free Ashby Leach campaign: one radio station ran hourly announcements for three days and 5 TV stations covered the encampment at one time or another during the weekend.

New vets were particularly impressed by the multi-national character of the action. As one vet put is, "You know we're told we can't ever get together. But just look at this: we got every color of the rainbow here, man, if we can build this kind of unity, can't nothing stop us."

BAY AREA

Two actions in the Bay Area supported and built the campaign to Free Ashby Leach. On Friday, March 11, vets and supporters picketed the local office of Senator Alan Cranston, taking with them an open letter to the Senator demanding that he talk to Carter and that charges against Leach be dropped.

For 45 minutes one of Cranston's aides talked with the vets; by the time VVAW and others were back on Monday in support of the demonstration in Cleveland, there was a response to their letter. While the Senator "understood" and "sympathized" with the problems of veterans and with Ashby Leach, there was "nothing he could do." Leach, according to Senator Cranston, had used the "wrong tactics" and the Senator could do no more--almost an exact duplicate of the stacks of letters which Ashby Leach had gotten for five years, all saying "we support you but there's nothing we can do."

During the Monday picket line, several vets spoke, showing that the slogan "Use Once and Throw Away," which is a summary of the story of Ashby Leach, also applies to millions of other veterans.

One veteran, a Muni bus driver, talked about how he had been hurt in high school, had nevertheless been drafted into the military, and had now been fighting for twelve years to get the VA to give him disability for the injury aggravated by military service. The VA, whose rich bosses are constantly trying to squeeze every penny, tells him that the injury was "pre-service," though it was clearly not enough to keep him out.

Another vet who came to the US from Guatamala, spent two years in the military. But, because he had been arrested for drugs--a habit picked up in the military--he is now threatened with deportation, a stark example of how the rich use vets once and then throw us away.

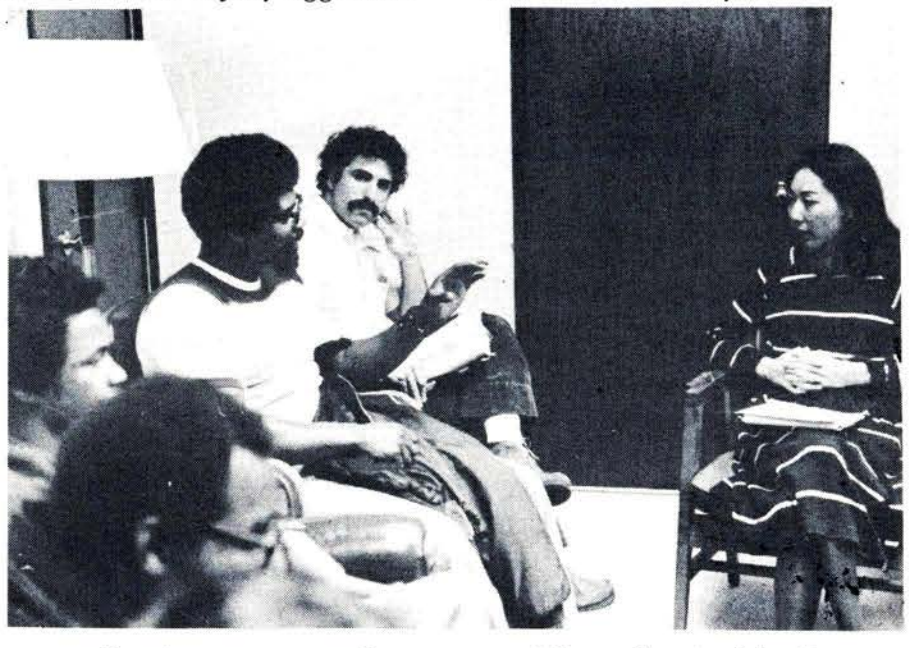
And another vet who was in Saigon when the US ambassador and his flunkies scurried out of the country in the face of advancing NLF soldiers, talked about why vets say that We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War.

SAN DIEGO

The new VVAW chapter in San Diego held a picket line in support of the campaign to Free Ashby Leach on Friday, March 11th. The picket was held in front of the VA Regional Office in San Diego.

There were *fifteen people* including vets dressed in jungle fatigues--vets around the country are ready to take up the war against the rich instead of for them. VA workers came out of the office to get copies of the VVAW leaflet so that they could take it back inside and pass it out to their co-workers.

Local radio covered the action, helping to get out the word about the Leach campaign and the vets struggle, but more there were vets at the picket line who had not been involved in the past, and who are now joining VVAW to stay in and build the fight against the rich and their rotten system.



Bay Area vets get the runaround from Senatorial aide.

Cleveland Demonstration

VETS SAY FREE ASHBY LEAC

(Continued from Page 1)

the Chessie bosses to participate in the GI Bill for Vietnam vets working on the railroad. Ashby's action not only brought attention to the rotten conditions facing vets today, but also pointed to the cause of those conditions: the rich, fat cats who run this system for their own profits.

In January 1977, Vietnam Veterans Against the War took up the campaign to Free Ashby Leach as its primary area of work, sponsoring Leach on a nationwide speaking tour that took him from coast to coast. VVAW passed out thousands of leaflets, collected signatures on petitions, held pickets at local Chessie offices. In addition to the work of VVAW, workers organizations and individuals took up the case in their factories and communities.

Buttons and stickers were taken into plants, mills and mines, sparking discussions about what is "legal" and "illegal," violent or peaceful, about the very nature of the system that we live in. Through the tour, petitioning and discussions many veterans and workers were won not only to support for Ashby but also for the need to fight back.

In Cleveland on March 2, members of VVAW and the Ashby Leach Defense Committee took direct action to publicize the case and put the Chessie System on the spot. Two dozen uniformed vets and others took to the Chessie railroad tracks, announcing: "Chessie owners have been interfering with the lives of Vietnam vets and Ashby by denying the GI Bill and putting Ashby on trial. As a consequence we are putting Chessie on notice: No business as usual! We're taking the tracks today and we will take them again in the future until our brother Ashby is free and the GI Bill honored." The tracks were held for two hours but Chessie officials put a hold on trains in the yard. There were no arrests--and no business as usual for Chessie!

Cleveland chapter of VVAW builds support during downtown encampment.

Ashby Leach speaks to the enthusiastic crowd at the Peoples' Tribunal during the Cleveland demonstration.

On March 5, the Cleveland Worker newspaper and the Organizing Committee for a National Workers Organization sponsored a dinner at which 85 workers joined together to support Ashby. Support resolutions were fought for in two steel union locals, though they lost. One worker talked about the support he had seen in his plant at Brook Park: "Free Ashby Leach" stickers had gone up on the walls, and under one of them a worker at the Ford plant had written that 'Ashby is a crazy hillbilly." The next day, more messages were written under the first one: "If he's crazy, so am I" (signed) A Yugoslavian hillbilly, and under that another one saying, "Me too! (signed) A Black hillbilly."

Starting the Monday before the demonstration, Cleveland VVAW members set up a vets encampment in the center of the city, displaying the real fighting history of veterans and the facts about the case of Ashby Leach. The encampment continued daily under a countdown banner that announced "5 Days Until the Vets Arrive." As the time of the demonstration grew near cars would stop in the middle of traffic as people jumped out of their cars, grabbed leaflets, and ran back to their cars, taking leaflets to distribute to their friends. One retired lady returned after taking literature on the case, made a donation and apologized for not having change the first time by.

On March 13th, Saturday, people began arriving in the morning. At 2 o'clock, 60 vets and supporters marched through the pouring rain to the center of Cleveland to announce that, "The Vets Have Arrived." That night 300 people turned out for a Peoples' Tribunal designed to expose the real criminal--the rich ruling class that made billions off our blood in wars like Vietnam, and now deny benefits to the vets who made it home.

Veterans on the March during the Cleve

During the Tribunal indictments were leveled on Chessie officials: Robbery in the 1st Degree, to wit, knowingly and intentionally denying GI Bill benefits to Ashby Leach and countless thousands of Vietnam veterans employed by Chessie. During the trial, veterans and workers experien hospitals from ou people f trolled b find: Gu

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EACH, MAKE CHESSIE PAY!

uring the Cleveland Demonstration

workers testified to their actual experiences, from rotten VA hospitals to the profits wrung from our sweat and blood. The people found what no court controlled by the rich would ever find: Guilty on all counts.

Representatives of workers organization from across the country came forward to speak, bringing out the fact that Ashby's case was not one of a single vet against a railroad, but of millions of vets and workers against Chessie and the whole system behind it. Rounding off the night, a working class couple from San Francisco, "Prairie Fire," brought the house to its feet with a verse from their song:

"Millions of us hate the
system, every outrage,
every lie.
Got to rally vets and every
body,
Free Ashby Leach is our
battle cry!"

Sunday morning, March 13, veterans took part in a meeting called by VVAW, while others went on a car caravan announcing the demonstration later in the day. During the meeting, VVAW talked about the necessity to build organization, to turn every struggle against every abuse into a battle, and recruit new members. The VVAW National Office pointed out the real history of the vets movement, citing example after example about how everything we've got was fought for by vets in the past, and the necessity for us to fight not only to hold on to what we've got but gain what we need for a decent life. Vet after vet brought out personal experiences of being used by the system in their wars and then thrown away like an empty Dixie cup.

At 1 o'clock, more than 350 people, led by about 100 uniformed, medaled veterans marched through the center of Cleveland's downtown, site of both the Soldiers and Sailors Monument and the Terminal Tower. At Public Square, a steelworker, president of Local 3059 of the United Steelworkers of America and spokesman for the Organizing Committee for a National Workers Organization, stated: "Ashby Leach is one of our own, a son of the working class. If the ruling class puts him in jail they will be declaring war on the whole working class."

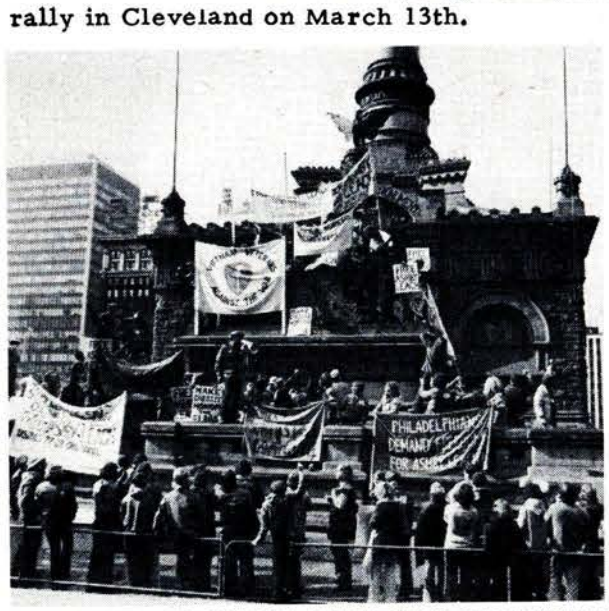
Following the rally, the demonstrators moved to the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, where veterans climbed atop and plastered the statues with stickers and posters reading FREE ASHBY LEACH! At the same time, a disabled vet pointed out how the rich would gladly spend large sums of money to glorify wars in their own interests but would not spend a dime on the vets who made it home alive. He continued about how the rich use vets to promote future wars, but that from now on, "We'll Fight the Rich, Not Their Wars."

On Monday morning as the trial began, 80 people marched through the streets to the Justice Center. A militant picket line was set up, and Chessie and the big-business controlled courts were told that this demonstration was not the end of our activities or our fight, but only the beginning.

The ruling class recognized the success of the demonstrations and the growing support that the campaign was winning. As the picket line was coming to an end, police showed up to issue an injunction from the judge which banned demonstrations near the courthouse, "loitering" in the hall around the courtroom, mandated body searches of spectators entering the court, and forbade persons involved in the case from talking to the media or making public statements. This tactic blew up in their faces as people saw just how much "freedom" there really is and how "impartial" the courts are. One vet stated "I didn't really see how much the courts and everything else really do serve the rich until this." A few days later, the judge was forced to put his injunction aside.

VVAW took a step forward coming off this demonstration. Not only have thousands taken up the campaign to Free Ashby Leach as their own, but a solid chapter of VVAW has been formed Cleveland where the vets will continue to build the fight around freedom for Ashby Leach.

Forming up for rally in Cleveland on March 13th.



THE CLEVELAND CHAPTER OF VVAW AND THE ALDC IS CALLING FOR PEOPLE TO COME TO CLEVELAND AT THE END OF THE TRIAL FOR A DEMONSTRATION TO FREE ASHBY LEACH. VVAW IS ALSO CALLING FOR LOCAL DEMONSTRATIONS ON THE SAME DATE TO KEEP THE CAMPAIGN IN FRONT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. AT PRESENT THE TRIAL IS PROCEEDING QUICKLY, SO VVAW HAS DECIDED THAT THE DEMONSTRATION WILL BE AT 2:00 PM, SATURDAY, APRIL 2. Call VVAW National Office (312) 651-1583 for further information.

Ashby Leach In Cleveland Courtroom

COURT SPEEDS THRU TRIAL

Chessie officials and "prosecutor" during the Peoples' Tribunal; the corporate bosses were found to be the real criminals, something that will never happen in their courts where Ashby is on trial.

The following report was written by a VVAW member who is attending the Ashby Leach trial in Cleveland. After two full weeks--the first week being taken up with various motions--the trial is already near its conclusion. In the week of March 21st, an entire jury(including alternates) was seated in two days, there were opening statements on the third day, and by Friday, there had been 13 witnesses (ten of the hostages and three police). It's clear that Chessie and the courts are trying to sweep this trial under the rug as quickly as they think they can possibly get away with.

You better not blink while sitting in on the Ashby Leach trial--you're liable to miss a couple of prosecution witnesses and well rehearsed ones at that. The court system, judge, and prosecution want to get this one out of the way as fast as possible.

For sure they want to skip the fact that Ashby is fighting back.

But it comes out anyway. It comes out when Ashby Leach acting as his own attorney--a "right" people had to fight to get--cross examines witnesses. And it comes out when we talk to people in the streets where the campaign to Free Ashby Leach is being built.

A lot comes out when Chessie witnesses testify also; they can remember every fact that fits the prosecution's case but they have a strange memory lapse when it comes to remembering statements from Ashby like, "I don't want to hurt anybody." Or the fact that no one was hurt.

One prosecution witness was a professional killer in cops uniform. He is a "professional" sniper for the Cleveland Police Department. His job is "to protect government officials and other high personages." He testified that he kept Ashby in the sights of his 6-inch long barreled .357 Magnum for 7 hours. He didn't use it, he testified, because it would probably have gone through Ashby and "hit some of the other hostages." When asked to compare his cannon with Ashby's .25 caliber peashooter, this expert testified that the .25 was "more dangerous to be hit by."

Chessie is so afraid of the facts of the case that one of the Vice President's of the system sent a letter out to all employees telling witnesses that in effect they must perjure themselves because, in his words, the truth would be "the kiss of death."

The Chessie System has a fulltime journalist stationed in the courtroom to insure that Chessie's "facts" will get out. And the owners of the press are having a sensationalist heyday. They will take one sentence in a whole day's testimony and blow it up into a scare headline. Despite accurate reporting by some rank-and-file reporters, the media is filling its usual role of fronting for the system.

We don't dispute the fact that Ashby tookover the 36th floor of the Terminal Tower--we never have disputed that. But that doesn't make him a criminal. It's not wrong to fight back. And it's the Chessie system's owners and their corporate cronies who are in fact the criminals.

"What kind of trial is this?" Ashby asked in court. "I don't care anything about legal nicities or trial procedures--I'm just trying to get at the truth here."

Cincinnati Vet Fights On

NO DISABILITY CUTS

In the February-March issue of The Veteran, there was an article about Jerry Bolin, a disabled vet and member of the Cincinnati Chapter of VVAW who was suddenly informed by the VA that his disability had been cut from 100% to 70%. With the help of the VVAW chapter, Jerry fought back against the ruling; the threat of a demonstration at the time of his "re-evaluation" hearing was enough for the VA to reinstate the 100% rating.

But the VA did not just cave in, though their concession was a real victory for Jerry and for vets. Instead, the VA presented Jerry with the choice of going to jail, leaving his wife and kids (so they could survive on welfare payments), or commiting himself to the VA psychiatric ward because, "Under this financial strain, you are a threat to society." Of course, there was no mention of who caused this "strain" in the first place--the VA and the system which will throw away any vet it can.

According to regulations, Jerry should have spent 21 days in the VA psych ward while he was being "evaluated." Because of the stir caused by his case and the agitation going on around it, he was out in 11 days with the VA telling him that he had been there "long enough."

The struggle, however, was not over. Jerry received a letter from the VA telling him that his 100% "award" was only temporary until he had been through another hearing. And when the hearing came up, VVAW members were there, wearing T-shirts saying "End VA Red Tape," "No Disability Cuts," and "Give Jerry his 100%." VVAW members leafletted all through the outpatient clinic of the hospital, agitating around the case. At the time this paper is being printed, the results of the "re-evalutaion hearing" are not in, but it is clear that the struggle against VA attempts to slash disability payments and to save a few dollars for their rich bosses is not over.

JoinVVAW

Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) is a nationwide organization of veterans from all wars which fights for the needs of vets and stands shoulder to shoulder with working people in our common struggle against the rich man's system. VVAW chapters across the country are building a national campaign to Extend and Expand the GI Bill, are demanding Jobs or Income Now, and are saying that We Won't Fight Another Rich Man's War.

VVAW grew out of the movement against the Indochina War as veterans of that war joined together to fight against US involvement. And, as the US government was forced to withdraw, VVAW began to turn its attention to the way in which veterans have been used once and then thrown away.

Membership in VVAW is open to veterans and others who want to build the veterans' struggle. It includes selling The Veteran (the VVAW national newspaper), wearing a VVAW button and paying dues; all members are encouraged, as much as possible to participate in the activities of local VVAW chapters. VVAW is a democratic organization with major decisions made by the membership at periodic regional and national meetings. For more information on joining VVAW, contact the local chapter or the VVAW National Office, P. O. Box 20184, Chicago, IL 60620. (312) 651-1583.

A VVAW Editorial

TERRORISM: WHO IS THE REAL CRIMINAL?

VVAW has been working on the campaign to Free Ashby Leach for several months. As more and more hostages have been seized in cities around the country in recent weeks, we've found discussions multiplying, especially in Cleveland but also in other places.

Simply, people are asking what is VVAW's stand on all this? If Ashby gets off what will happen next? Society is falling apart, and still you say "free this hostage taker?"

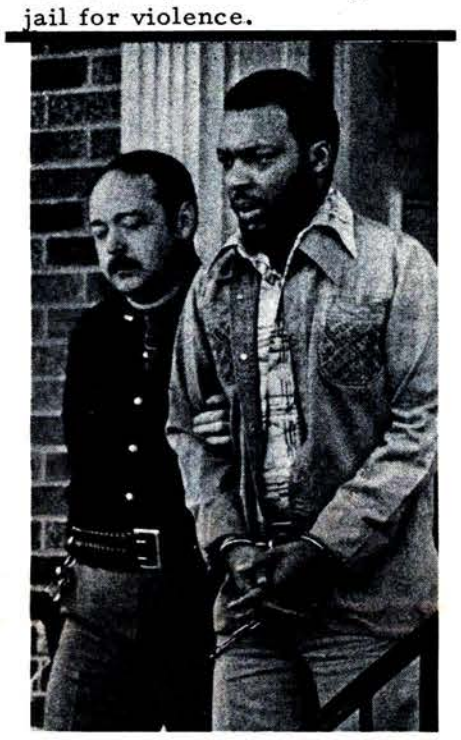
The media is pushing the same idea, everywhere from Newsweek cover stories to CBS editorials to local papers. And the media is also supplying an answer: Burn them all! They're all lunatics and no one is safe. It's an attempt to lump together each act together with the solution of "law and order," "national unity," and working through the system for "redress of grievances."

But let's look at the facts and let's look at the solutions--theirs and ours.

Ashby Leach, like many of us, went into the military buying the whole system--Mom, apple pie and the flag. Getting out he wanted to forget 'Nam and all its horror. He got married and went to work for the C&O railroad, part of the Chessie system, as an apprentice mechanic. While working for Chessie he tried to get the GI Bill, the same one promised by the recruiter. But he found out that Chessie didn't participate so he tried to get it by writing letters to Congress, to the union, to Chessie officials, to anyone connected in any way. He picketed, he protested; what he got after five years of trying to work through the system was not only no GI Bill but also his name "removed from the seniority roster"--in other words, fired. "Redress of grievances" sounded good, he found out, but the reality of the situation was that the system doesn't work worth a damn. In America, there's "justice"--for "just-us rich."

Sick and tired, Ashby fought back. He went to the corporate headquarters of the Chessie system and held the office for nine hours. He demanded that Chessie honor the GI Bill for all its Vietnam vets, that Chessie pay back money they had cheated vets out of by not participating in the program, and that Hays T. Watkins (Chessie President) give back a flag given him by the American Legion for doing such a good job for vets.

Ashby's gun was not pointed at the hostages; it was pointed straight at the system which ripped him off. He wasn't going to hurt the workers in the office. In fact the shotgun wasn't even loaded except with copies of the letters he had written for himself and other vets with Chessie. But he is branded a criminal. He's the one, we're told, who should go to jail for violence.



Cory Moore, above, and freed hostages; media tries to make all acts against the system the same.

From what we can see, he did nothing wrong. He went to where the problem was and demanded what was due him. It's not "crazy" to fight back--it's right. The only way we've got anything out of this damn rotten system is fighting for it. Letters, prayers, "reason" have at most won a thimbleful of justice for workers or vets.

The only reason that there isn't still slavery is because a war was fought to free the slaves, not because the slave owners suddenly saw the error of keeping humans in chains. Child labor, teenagers and small children working in mines and mills ten or fourteen hours a day: the capitalists who owned the factories gave in only after long, hard and determined struggle, not because they cared if workers' children had the freedom to grow up. The 8-hour day--we won it, but only after years of determined struggle. And we're still fighting to keep it and even to get it back again. Ask an auto worker or anyone else with forced overtime.

The fact of the matter is that the rich don't give us anything--they take. They take us as youth and fling us around the world to protect their colonies, their markets, their cheap labor. They wring the life out of us in their factories constantly going for profits. And if we're not profitable? Just ask the old man in Mansfield, Ohio? A retired worker was delinquent $18 on his electric bill. So, in the middle of the winter, the Electric Company had his heat turned off. He Died! This worker died because the possibility of losing more than $18 was more important than his life. Did we see his picture on the cover of Newsweek? Did the police arrest the owners of the Electric Company for murder? When a war like Vietnam is fought, where is that talk? When a veteran stands up, refuses to be crushed and attacks the source of the problem, he is a criminal and must "pay the price." Under this system and in these courts, who will pay for the retired Mansfield worker?

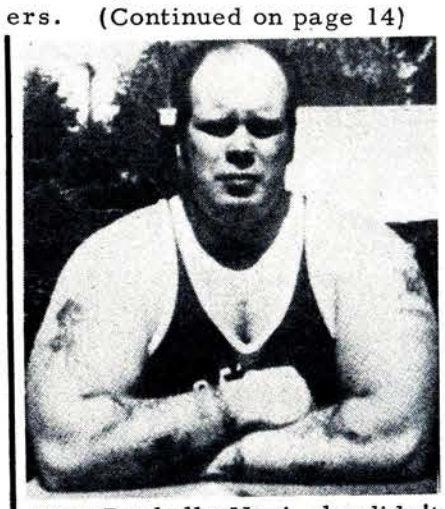
This begins to get at the heart of the real question. The system isn't set up as an impartial arbitrator. We are constantly pumped with propaganda that justice is "blind" and we see pictures of justice holding the scales where we are all judged equally, rich or poor, factory owner or factory worker. But statues aren't always modeled after reality. The courts as well as the legislature, police, military, and other arms of the government are set up to protect the rich and their property, and to keep us down. This system is of, by and for the rich.

We back Ashby because it's right to fight back against a system that is set up to grind us down. Not because he wrote letters for five years or because the shotgun wasn't loaded--the question around Ashby's case is not what Ashby did to the system but what the system did to him.

While we're not experts on all the individual cases of hostage taking, there is one more we can comment on. In the suburbs of Cleveland, Cory Moore took over a police station and held a police lieutenant hostage. His original demands, as put out in the media, were nonsense. Things like "All white people leave the planet within seven days." As time went on his demands changed; he asked that Carter apologize for all the abuses heaped on Black people since they were brought here in chains in the 1600's. Cory did not wake up one morning in the land of milk and honey and suddenly rebel because of some psychosis or neurosis. In fact that particular police station was noted for its racist attacks on Black people. According to the Call and Post, a Black weekly newspaper, the day before Cory's takeover a Black worker and home owner in the area was arrested and beaten in his own driveway by the police. The charge was "suspicion of stealing a car." The car was his, parked in his driveway, and he was waxing it at the time.

Cory didn't wake up with a blood clot on the brain and go crazy. He was lashing out against a rotten system that had kept his grandparents in slavery and himself in wage slavery and, on top of that, had subjected him to oppression because he was Black. We don't condemn Cory Moore. Although he was a confused person, he spoke to some real questions of the oppression of Black people.

That doesn't mean we look at every act in the same way. The Nazi in New Rochelle, NY, who picked up a gun and shot his fellow workers because they were Black or Jewish should have been shot. It's only too bad that he wasn't stopped before he got to his fellow workers. (Continued on page 14)



New Rochelle Nazi--he didn't die soon enough!

During Washington Demo

UNEMPLOYED SAY "NO CUTS -- NO WAY!"

(Continued from front page)

no jobs in sight for years. Vets from East Coast cities, also hit by above average unemployment. And employed workers from the shops of New York, Philadelphia and Milwaukee. The fight against these cuts and for Jobs or Income was taken right to the federal government's doorstep.

NO CUTS--NO WAY

From the first time UWOC heard about the bill to wipe out 26 weeks of Emergency Unemployment Benefits, the fight was on. As a brother from Chicago UWOC said, "We're going to make sure Carter and his rich friends don't forget--they don't have their boots on our backs. They're going to know us unemployed ain't sitting down with our face in our hands, drowning in our own tears. We're getting ourselves organized and we ain't taking no kind of cuts--No Way--No Time!"

Unemployed workers have been fighting this attack since January. The rulers who live like kings off our labor wanted the extensions cut to slip through quietly. UWOC made sure this wouldn't happen. They dragged the covers off, exposing to thousands what was coming down, and why.

And just like the government feared, everywhere the news went out it was met with disbelief and outrage that, having poured life's sweat and blood into one plant or another across the country, workers were to be thrown out like so many broken down machines, with no benefits.

Since the opening of Congress, this outrage has been turned into organized action--at the offices of Congressmen and newspaper editors, at unemployment centers and into the hallowed halls of the US Senate. With the issue being discussed on unemployment lines and in factories and mills in every major city, the government had been forced to deal with the anger their position on the cuts has stirred up among the people. But because of the growing economic crisis in this country, the only answer the owning class has for us is to sacrifice our interests to those of big business one way or another.

CARTER'S BILL HALVES WAGES

At Carter's request, Congress has begun to unite around a solution--one that conceals its attack by looking good on the outside. House Resolution 3723 grants a one-year extension of the benefits, with new rules for when they apply. But the heart of the bill is a change in what they can say is "suitable work" that workers must accept or be thrown off benefits. Under this bill, any worker on extended benefits must take any job offered in any line of work paying more than the minimum wage if that is more than unemployment benefits would provide.

This bill would pave the way for thousands of workers who have been thrown out of work to be forced into slave jobs at half the wages they were making before. All the talk about how much Carter is "giving the worker" is just wrapping paper for this attack. Carter is giving the employing class a club to use on the working class. He is giving them a better chance to use the unemployed to keep wages down for everyone. And he is giving the unemployed the choice of slave jobs at slave wages, or no more benefits.

WE WANT JOBS

1,000 answers to this gift rang out in front of the White House. No Way! A delegation of unemployed called on Carter demanding that he come out before the people and explain this attack. We Demand Jobs--Decent Jobs at Decent Wages! Speaker after speaker hammered the point home. "Our first demand is for decent jobs. But as long as there are no decent jobs, we demand enough income to live on for as long as we are unemployed. We won't sit by and let our benefits be cut, and we won't be used to push down the whole working class."

UNEMPLOYED/EMPLOYED SAME CRISIS--SAME FIGHT

Employed workers around the country have taken up this fight, and marched through the street of DC shoulder to shoulder with their unemployed brothers and sisters.

"If this attack was just aimed at the unemployed, we would fight it. It is crime enough to force thousands of working people into poverty. But it is more than that. It is the employing class trying to drive our working class into the dirt. They lay us off, then speed the rest of us to death. And they try to use the laid off guys to get us to work even harder for less money. How often are we told, if you don't toe the line, there are 1000 guys out there waiting for your job. Well, we have an answer--it's like this banner on the stage says, It's the Same Crisis and the Same Fight! And it's the same employing class against us, employed or unemployed." (A speaker from the United Workers Organization of Milwaukee.)

On the way to the White House, the march passed the marble palace of the top AFL-CIO leaders. The workers recognized it at once from all the chauffered limousines out front. And a chant went up--George Meany, You Ain't Here, Our Demands are Very Clear--No Cuts, No Way, Make the Bosses Pay. The top AFL-CIO brass has signed on the dotted line to support the Carter Bill--straight against the interests of the working class. And when a member of the Executive Board of a New Jersey Steelworkers Local spoke at the rally, he emphasized that the guys in the shop are not behind the AFL-CIO's position on this, that an attack on one is an attack on all, that we all have to get together to stop this.

KILL CARTER'S BILL

Jimmy Carter never came out to face the music. The word was that he was busy playing tennis in the White House back yard. But the tune is not going to get softer.

As a UWOC speaker said, "We'll go back from here more united and more determined to fight this thing through--to go back and when the high and mighty are trying to write this thing into law, we'll hit them with actions in every corner of the country. These guys will shake in their boots at the sight of the marching army of the unemployed. We will take our protest to the leaders of the AFL-CIO, who say we should take this cut and be happy. And we have to plan now for coordinated actions across this country--employed and unemployed with armbands and rallies. We will fight this thing and we will win!"

Just like the bosses try to pit the employed against the unemployed, Carter and his political hack friends are trying to split vets off from the other unemployed workers. That's the design behind various "Jobs for Vets" plans which have been floating out of Carter's office. The economic wizards in government hope that, if they can promise 200,000 jobs for vets, then they can get vets to fight against the other unemployed workers for the crumbs. No Way! Vets who were part of the march, and vets around the country want no part of plans which attempt to pit vets against their unemployed brothers and sisters.

One unemployed woman from the Midwest spoke with the anger and determination of the whole demonstration, saying "I never did this kind of thing before. But when they laid me off, that was the biggest mistake they ever made. I'm fighting now."

The battle against the cuts and Carter's Bill is growing fast. It has to become a dividing line between the working class and the employing class. If we close ranks, build this fight as one united class, we can defeat these cuts and strengthen our class.

As one unemployed steel worker, thrown out after 10 years on the job put it--"We raised hell before we came. We're going to do some ground shaking before we leave DC, and they are going to see a lot more than this in the future!"

ISA, RSB Seize Statue to Protest Shah's Repression

Support Iranian Struggle

The Iranian Student Association (ISA) is rallying--holding numerous press interviews, carrying out demonstrations in more than 8 cities in the US, and staging hunger vigils involving up to 160 members and supporters--to bring to the attention of the American people the continuing struggle of the Iranian people against the reactionary regime and brutal repression by the Shah of Iran. On February 15, six members of ISA and student supporters from the Revolutionary Student Brigade took over the Statue of Liberty, chaining themselves to the crown; they hung two large banners which read, "FREE THE 18," and "DOWN WITH THE SHAH," in protest of the most recent arrests of 18 freedom fighters in Iran. The 18 are being held without trial, being tortured, and their names are being kept secret. On this same day an international delegation entered Iran to inspect conditions of political prisoners. The delegation was denied the right to see the prisoners.

These 18 patriots were arrested in several separate street incidents where 13 other Iranian patriots were killed. These latest atrocities of the Shah raise the number of patriots he has had to kill to 200 in the past 18 months. The figures stand at more than 500 murders and over 100,000 people imprisoned since 1970.

The Shah of Iran, an absolute monarch, was installed by a CIA coup which toppled a popularly elected government in 1953. The Shah's regime has no popular base of support and must rely on the most fascist measures to rule. The tentacles of the Shah's secret police, the SAVAK, are seen and felt in every sphere of Iranian society.

In schools and universities, students are frequently stopped and frisked, no one can go in or out of the campuses without proper identification and no one besides students, the faculty, and persons on official business are ever allowed on university grounds.

In factories, the regime has appointed ex-military officers as day-to-day administrators, and each factory has an "internal security" division invariably headed by a SAVAK agent. Workers in Iran are not allowed to form their own independent trade unions. Instead they are forced to join reactionary trade unions formed by and headed up by SAVAK. Strikes are illegal and those taking part can expect 10 to 20 years in prison; strike leaders are given life sentences or executed.

In the countryside, the Shah has his own version of the "strategic hamlet" program that the US tried to use in Vietnam. Peasants are driven out of several small villages and forced to live in a central village so that they can be better controlled by the army. Special identification cards keep villagers segregated; migration is strictly limited.

The US ruling class is the main prop of the Shah's regime. According to a report released on August 2, 1976, by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, there are 27,000 US military advisors and defense and intelligence personnel in Iran, and the number "will increase to 50,000-60,000 or higher by the end of the decade."

Iran has been a source of high profits for US capitalists through exploiting the cheap labor of Iranian workers and peasants. The US ruling class uses the Shah as a valuable tool in maintaining and extending US military power in the Middle East. At present there are 30,000 troops of the Shah in neighboring Oman attempting to put down the liberation struggles of the people of that country.

A few days after the takeover of the Statue of Liberty, 100 students held the President of Queens College in New York City in his office for four hours demanding that a contract between Queens College and the National University of Iran be stopped. This contract was set up supposedly to "help" Iranian students get jobs when they returned to Iran. But this computer network was in fact nothing more than an arm of SAVAK for keeping tab on Iranian students in the US.

Out of this confrontation, the President promised a *sign*-letter declaring Section C (which pertains to keeping lists of dissident Iranian students) null and void. In talking about this action with students on the campus, members of ISA and the RSB made it clear that it was important to get rid of the whole contract and not just this one section, since the whole contract serves to support the Shah. The RSB members also aimed fire at President Carter who preaches about "human rights" in areas under the control of the Soviet Union while at the same time the US is propping up such fascists as the Shah.

As stated in the press release from ISA and RSB at the time of the Statue of Liberty takeover, "The Iranian students desire a land free of foreign domination and free of the Shah's dictatorial rule. These students are standing up as a part of the broad people's struggle in Iran. The American students are joining in this fight. The American people have no interest in dominating other countries as the American rulers do, instead their very interest is in joining with other people to fight against our own rulers who perpetuate the same misery in this country as well as abroad."

"New" VA Bureaucrat, cont'd

(Continued from page 5)

tem, one fact remains. The VA is a huge, $19 billion a year operation with the largest healthcare system in the US, the largest adult education program and, in short, an immense bureaucracy that is supposed to serve 30 million vets plus dependents, totaling nearly 45% of the US population.

A close look at the VA will show that the services for vets are being slashed, cut back, and eliminated because they don't serve the interests of the rich who would rather spend money elsewhere for a better rate of return. Mr Cleland and Mr Wilson will see to it that these policies are carried out.

Just like the guy who appointed him, Cleland becomes tight lipped when confronted with serious questions concerning changes in the VA system. His references to "reduction in some areas" and "consolidation" in others sound like the same old crap we've been hearing, dressing up attacks on vets in the language of bureaucrats.

Mr Cleland recently stated "I no longer fly by the seat of my pants as I once did. I ask God for guidance every morning and he has led me here." Well, that's fine, but it won't be a quest for religion that will lead thousands of vets to the VA. They'll be there in the day-to-day fight for what they need to survive.

In spite of his "divine right to rule" at the VA, Max Cleland and the rich he fronts for will have to answer to vets for the way they try to force us to live.

Carters Discharge Scheme

Not Even Peanuts ONLY SHELLS

The latest act concerning veterans in the "Let's Smile, Close Our Eyes to the Past, Present and Future, and All Get Together" road show, is talk about upgrading discharges. The good ol' boy's plan is to give a blanket upgrading to the category of "General under Honorable Conditions" for vets who got bad paper for certain specific reasons such as drug abuse and desertion. The rest would still be subject to case by case review.

As with the rest of the promises Carter has made to the American people (at least the ones he hasn't already broken), his discharge plan comes up short for two reasons--what it is and what it doesn't cover. What it is, is nothing but better bad paper. General under Honorable Conditions is still less than honorable, and that means a helluva lot when you are trying to find a decent job in a society where unemployment is somewhere around 11% and threatening to go higher.

This plan also falls short because it doesn't dover everyone's bad paper. It subjects everyone not in the small category to case by case review which takes years to get and is only about 15-20% successful (if the vet has the bucks and can afford to have his own lawyer as well as make an appearance before the board, the chances are better). Hundreds of thousands of vets have had

their lives ruined or put in disarray because of that lousy DD-214. And most of them, about 19 out of 20, never even got their say in court. Some commander just gave us the bad paper because some lifer called us "boy" and we hit him upside the head, or we got tired of the hassle and didn't shine our boots or we got to talking in the barracks against the war or against the oppression and discrimination in the military. Hell, Richard Nixon conducted an illegal war for four years, invaded a neutral country (Cambodia), held back funds for social programs like the poverty program and transportation, and sent his thugs out to break and enter and beat up people. For that he got pardoned to a $100,000 a year retirement on the beach in Southern California.

How come vets have been suffering with bad paper for 3, 5 and 10 years or longer and Nixon gets off? How come families like the Rockefellers build their fortunes off the sweat and blood of working people including gunning down 13 members of the families of striking miners in Ludlow Colorado in 1914? It's because this is a class society, and the rich class runs things in their interests, not ours. Whether it's fighting a war for profit in Vietnam or saving bucks by keeping the veterans who fought that war down, the Presidents and policy makers do what serves the interests of the rich.

That's where smilin' Jimmy comes in. Workers, vets, minorities, have always fought back against the abuses we face. Jimmy says he wants to heal the wounds of the country. What he means is that people are fighting against a trainload of abuses made worse by a failing economy. Smilin' Jimmy wants to throw out a few crumbs and expects us to squeeze our cheeks, turn down the heat, and be happy. In fact the only reason Carter even came up with this limited discharge plan was because we put the heat on him and his rich friends in the first place. VVAW and the overall movement for amnesty has been pointing to bad paper for years, to the point where Carter was forced to do something.

An amnesty struggle began five years ago; VVAW and others fought to include bad paper vets among those in need of amnesty. There were demonstrations and petitions and conferences, and now tens of millions of Americans want amnesty for war resisters and the elimination of the less than honorable discharge. Smilin' Jimmy's trying to throw us a bone, but we ain't smilin'. We demand:

UNIVERSAL, UNCONDITIONAL AMNESTY!

SINGLE-TYPE DISCHARGE FOR ALL VETS!

The case of Ashby Leach is one more example of how and why it's right to rebel. Here, members of Youth In Action in the Bay Area of California present Ashby with a banner to proclaim their support for his act of resistance.

TERRORISM, CONT'D

(Continued from page 11)

This system is falling apart. The rich want us to get together with them to save it. They try to paint every act of resistance with the same brush. They try to convince us that without them there is only anarchy, that with them, "justice," "equality," and "redress of grievance" are all available. It isn't true. Every act is not the same. It's no surprise to us that a system built on the premise of dog eat dog, profits before people, a system that kept Black people in bondage, carried out a war like Vietnam, killed an old man for $18, and offers us the "bright" future of unemployment and war, gives rise to acts of every type. But our salvation doesn't lie with them anymore than relying on Al Capone to defend our property from Machine-Gun Kelly. Our future lies in fighting them, not in crawling off in some corner and dying. It lies in protecting our brother Ashby. We must continue to fight; we must explain why these other things are happening. And we have to identify and battle against the real criminal--Cyrus Eaton, the Chessie System, and the whole damn system of which it is a part.

The press asks, "Wouldn't it have been better for Ashby to continue writing letters just a little longer?" Well, Ashby could have written letters for another 60 years and on his gravestone they could have put, "He wrote letters for 65 years, died, and still didn't get the GI Bill--and no one ever knew why."

VETS' HISTORY

continued from pg16

Haynie—Louisville Courier-Journal

'So why shouldn't I do my thing? Lord knows, I've already done yours'

was taken and all the vets voted to go with the majority. The Justice Department backed down, no arrests were made and the vets won a major victory defying the Supreme Court. That night the vets slept on the Mall.

On Thursday, 110 angry vets marched to the Supreme Court and held a demonstration against the war. The police ordered them away; the vets refused. The cops gave warning but the vets still stayed and all 110 were arrested. The news spread rapidly to the other veterans, many of whom were still lobbying. The anger was deepening and the frustrations of talking to Congressmen was growing.

At the same time the District Court dissolved their original injunction and castigated the Justice Department for refusing to carry out the Supreme Court order. This news was greeted with applause by the great majority of the veterans who were coming to see that relying on themsleves and the American people was a better way to direct their antiwar sentiments.

On Thursday night plans were made for the final day of the demonstration. All vets would dispose of their war medals in a concrete act against the war. Another struggle began about how to do it--one suggestion was that all medals be

I demand an immediate and total withdrawal of all troops —from Washington, D.C.'

put in a body bag and the bag be presented to Congress. But by now the vast majority of vets no longer wanted to take this direction and another plan was adopted. The vets slept well that night.

FINAL DAY

On Friday morning, the final day of the demonstration, the veterans lined up and marched to the Capitol Building. By now the number had grown to over 1000. Once at the Capitol they placed a sign marked "Trash" on a statue. One by one each vet approached the statue and a microphone. The vets told their names, their units, and many made statements against the war; then, angrily, they threw their war medals over the fence at the statue and at the Capitol Building itself.

One veteran threw away his nine Purple Hearts. Another threw over the fence a cane he used as a result of a war injury. And on and on it went. Discharge papers, Silver Stars, Bronze Stars, Purple Hearts. In all, literally thousands of medals were thrown back at the government that had sent each of the veterans to fight for the US ruling class. Never before had such a demonstration occurred by war veterans. It was unprecedented in the history of the country that veterans protested in such a unified and dramatic way their opposition to a war that was still raging on the other side of the world.

The sentiments of the vets was expressed best by one veteran who tossed his medals away and stated: "If we have to fight again, it will be to take these steps."

With this action the demonstration ended. It abounded in lessons for all vets. During the course of the week the veterans had stood up to and beat all the attempts that the government had used to stop the demonstration. The vets backed down the most powerful apparatus of the country--the President, the Supreme Court, the Congress. It forged a unity that was carried on afterwards among the veterans and their organization, VVAW. It precipitated the largest demon-

stration that ever occurred in Washington--on Saturday, April 24th. It gave impetus to the May Day demonstrations where over 10,000 demonstrators were arrested for fighting against the war. And it gave the American people a clear insight that the war in Vietnam was opposed even by those who fought it.

vets' notes, cont'd
NO END TO PREPAYMENTS, VETS SAY

(Continued from page 6)

banks that will turn them down, of course, but remember all the job application forms and credit forms which ask you, "Have you ever been turned down for a loan?"), and providing written proof that you cannot get the loans.

These are some of the so-called advantages in the new Bill. Some of them have been well-publicized. But the Bill also contains sneak attacks on vets.

*An end to the system of "prepayments." In the title of the Bill is a section which reads that the purpose is "to clarify, codify, and strengthen the administration of educational benefits to prevent or reduce abuse." Or, to put it another way, tighten down the screws on vets.

The VA's justification for ending prepayments is that vets will register for school, get the first check in advance, and then not go to school--and thus "cheat" the government out of $292. To correct this "abuse" the VA will only pay checks after vet can prove that he or she has been in school. For most vets what this will mean is no check at all for periods up to 4-6 months; even the VA (which lies whenever convenient) says there will be a 2-month period of no bucks. And that dry spell will come at the same time that vets have to pay tuition, buy books, and materials to get started in school.

This is no minor attack; it will mean that thousands of vets will not be able to go to school. Thousands more who are in school won't be able to afford to continue. Vets are angry--a meeting called in San Diego by VVAW brought out 35 vets who want to fight around the end of prepayments. The no-prepayment policy is aimed to go into effect on June 30, 1977; the fight to stop this change has to start now! Vets--get together; contact the local VVAW chapter and close ranks to stop this attack!

Another attack that vets are already fighting is the so-called 85-15 rule; according to the new Bill, the VA will no longer pay benefits to vets enrolled in a school where over 85% of the students get GI Bill money or other federal grants (the "other" federal grants include hundreds of federal programs where students get financial assistance). The VA, in sponsoring this change, said that it was aimed at the rip-off schools which have nothing but veteran enrollment. In fact, many schools, particularly city colleges in large cities, have a high percentage of students (vets and non-vets) who get some kind of federal assistance. According to the new law, vets in these schools can be cutoff the GI Bill.

The economy of the US is not in all that great a shape. The rich bosses who run the country want to use what money is available to prop up railroads, build new bombers, anything on which they can make a profit. And so they come down on vets programs along with all the other programs like food stamps, which don't make them a profit. They're afraid to come down too hard all at once because they can't handle a raging battle with angry veterans. So they go one step at a time in hopes that vets won't fight. They're wrong. Vets will fight!

Join the Struggle--
Extend and Expand the GI Bill!
No End to Prepayments!
Decent Benefits for all Vets!

Vets' History

OPERATION "DEWEY CANYON III"

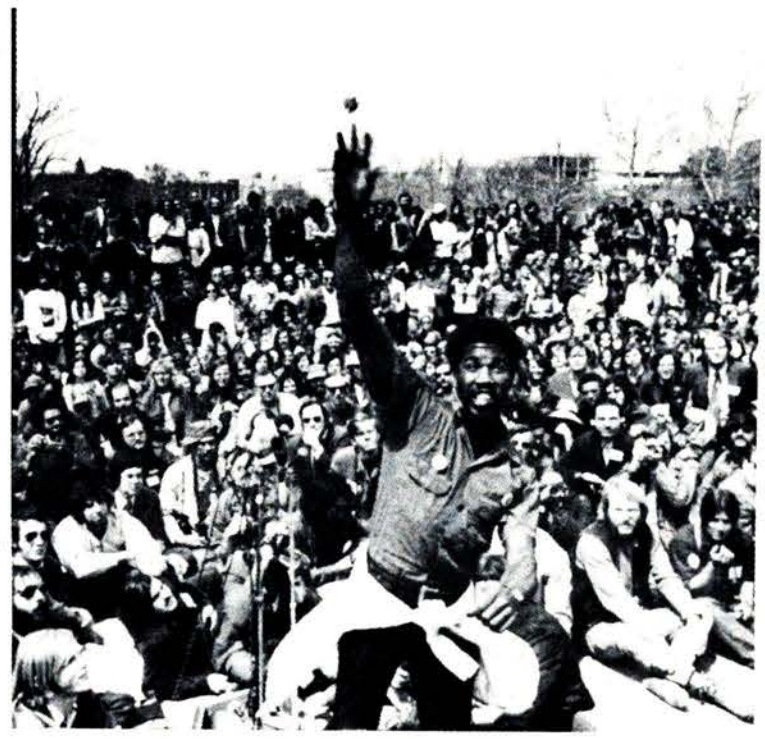
In April of 1971 the war was raging in Indochina. The vast majority of Americans were sick and tired of it and wanted the war to end. Thousands and thousands were actively demonstrating their opposition to the war as the US government was losing more and more support for its Vietnam policies.

Soldiers in Vietnam were refusing to go on combat missions. At home, veterans formed a national organization, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). It was in April of 1971 that VVAW held its first national demonstration to protest the war in Vietnam. The demonstration was named "Operation Dewey Canyon III" (Dewey Canyon I and II were secret operations into Laos that were never reported to the American people). It was held in Washington DC from April 18th to April 23rd, and was the most powerful antiwar demonstration held up to that time; it sparked off a series of major demonstrations that made it clear that the American people wanted the US out of Indochina.

A BRIEF BACKGROUND

VVAW had been formed in 1967, but it wasn't until 1970 that the organization realized its potential and began to see the importance of building nationally. In late January of 1971 an investigation into war crimes, with 150 vets testifying from firsthand experience, was held in Detroit. At this 3-day investigation the real basis was laid for organizing VVAW nationally. In mid February a meeting was held in New York bringing together vets from all over the country. There, VVAW became a national organization and the idea of DC III was crystallized. Vets went back to their cities and began to build for the Washington demonstration.

Vets and Gold Star Mothers lay wreaths outside the locked gate at Arlington National Cemetery.



VETS ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON

On April 18th, the vets started arriving in Washington, DC. It was clear that the demonstration would be a success. The vets met in West Potomac Park for a night's encampment. There was a festive atmosphere as vets from different parts of the country came together with a common purpose. Some vets met buddies they hadn't seen since they were in the military.

Talk of how the different chapters were building their activities and who they were aimed at began. During the next several days differences on this point would emerge--whether the focus should be towards relying on Congress and the courts to end the war, or towards vets and the American people whose anger would force an end to the war.

DEMONSTRATION BEGINS

On the morning of April 19th the demonstration began. About 900 vets and several Gold Star parents (whose sons had died in Vietnam) marched to Arlington National Cemetary to pay tribute to their fallen comrades who had died on the battlefield. As the vets marched across the Potomac River the first confrontation of the week began. Authorities refused the vets entrance to the Cemetary. Enraged, the vets and Gold Star parents held a brief ceremony at the locked gate. A Gold Star father played "Taps" and a wreath was laid at the locked gate.

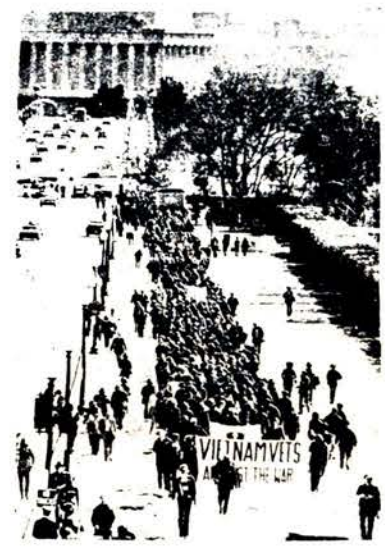
The vets marched back through Washington to the Capitol steps, vowing to return to the Cemetery at a later date. Once at the Capitol, the struggle came out in the open around who vets should rely on. Awaiting the veterans was a group of Congressmen who talked about how they were trying to end the war. After several had spoken on and on, the vets got impatient. One vet called out, "You've been talking to us long enough, it's time you began listening." Many of the vets agreed with this sentiment; others did not. Several VVAW leaders tried to channel the demonstration back towards Congress, but it was clear that the sentiment against Congress was beginning to run deep.

Guerilla theatre among the government buildings in Washington, DC.

The vets marched to the Mall behind the Capitol building and set up a permanent camp for the remainder of their stay. The District Court had ordered that this encampment was illegal, but the Court of Appeals reversed the order. The battle for the Mall had begun. In fact the vets were to battle President Nixon and the press as well.

Nixon was getting hourly reports on the vets. His spokesman made a statement to the press that the vets weren't vets at all. The papers began talking about "alleged veterans." This tactic was stopped when the veterans produced over 900 DD 214's (discharge papers).

Meanwhile, 200 vets went to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to listen to hearings on the war. Others lobbied Congressmen or performed guerilla theater around the city. 200 vets returned to Arlington National Cemetery, gained entrance and conducted the cere-



mony they were refused the day before.

But the big battle of the day came when the Supreme Court reversed the order of the Court of Appeals, and Warren Burger (Chief Justice) gave the vets until 4:30 the next afternoon to clear off the Mall.

On Wednesday the vets continued to lobby Congress. By now it was becoming clearer that all Congressmen were doing was glad-handing the veterans. And the vets began to take a more militant attitude--about 50 vets from New York took over Senator Buckley's office when the Senator refused to meet with them.

VETS DEFY SUPREME COURT

At 4:30 that afternoon, at the time the vets were supposed to clear off the Mall, nobody moved. A deal was offered--the vets could stay but only if they stayed awake all night. Several VVAW leaders tried to win vets to this deal. After much debate a vote was taken; by a small majority the vets decided to sleep rather than to take the deal. Another vote

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